A FLOWER BOOK

EDEN COYBEE &
NELLIE BENSON

CHILDREN'S BOOK
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No. 7. A FLOWER BOOK

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7 **A FLOWER BOOK.** Illustrated in Colours by NELLIE BENSON. Story by EDEN COYBEE.

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A Flower Book

THE STORY BY

EDEN COYBEE

THE PICTURES BY

NELLIE BENSON

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In the history of men's love for God or for God's creatures there comes one hour of divine uplifting when a symbol must stand for the unspoken word.

That symbol is ever a flower.

There is a path of flowers through all science.

In order that each flower of my little story book should not masquerade in vain meaningless garments or sing to empty words, I have sought the help of many wiser than I in this knowledge born of sympathy with nature. So this little book is not entirely a fairy-tale.

To those who would follow me along the same by-ways, I wish to say that I owe a great deal to the Reverend Hilderic Friend for his ever delightful book on "Flowers and Flower Lore."

E. C.

CHRISTMAS ROSE

A FLOWER BOOK.

When the snow lies thick on the ground and all the streams that babble in summer lie still in their houses of ice, you think, I daresay, that the flowers are asleep, and that nothing can wake them before the spring?

But I know of a wood where the little elves and sprites and the delicate fairies dance in a ring in the moonlight, and I will tell you of

what happens there at twelve o'clock on the first night of every year.

The clock in the cathedral tower booms out twelve solemn strokes, and all the church bells peal a welcome to the New Year. That is the signal for the fairies to come down on a moonbeam—with their white dresses shining and their long yellow hair streaming.

Most beautiful of them all is Rusialka, the queen of fairies and elves. She wears a

IVY

WINTER JASMINE

necklet of dewdrops, and dewdrops sparkle in her dress and in her hair. She glides softly over the snow, and all the fairies follow her to a great elder bush that grows in the middle of the little wood. She knocks once and calls:

"Lady Elder! are you within?"

And the tree shoots out its green buds and the tender leaves unfold themselves.

Then again the fairy Rusialka knocks and calls:

"Lady Elder! Lady Elder! are you within?"

And the sweet white blossoms open overhead, and a gentle rain of flowers falls upon the fairies.

For the third time Rusialka calls:

"Lady Elder! Lady Elder! Lady Elder! are you within?"

And then the tree opens slowly, and the Lady Elder appears. She is very old, for

MICHAELMAS DAISY

SNOWDROP

she is the Mother of all the fairies and elves.

"What is it you want of me, my children?" she asks, in a voice like a silver bell.

And all the fairies curtsey very long and low, and they answer her:

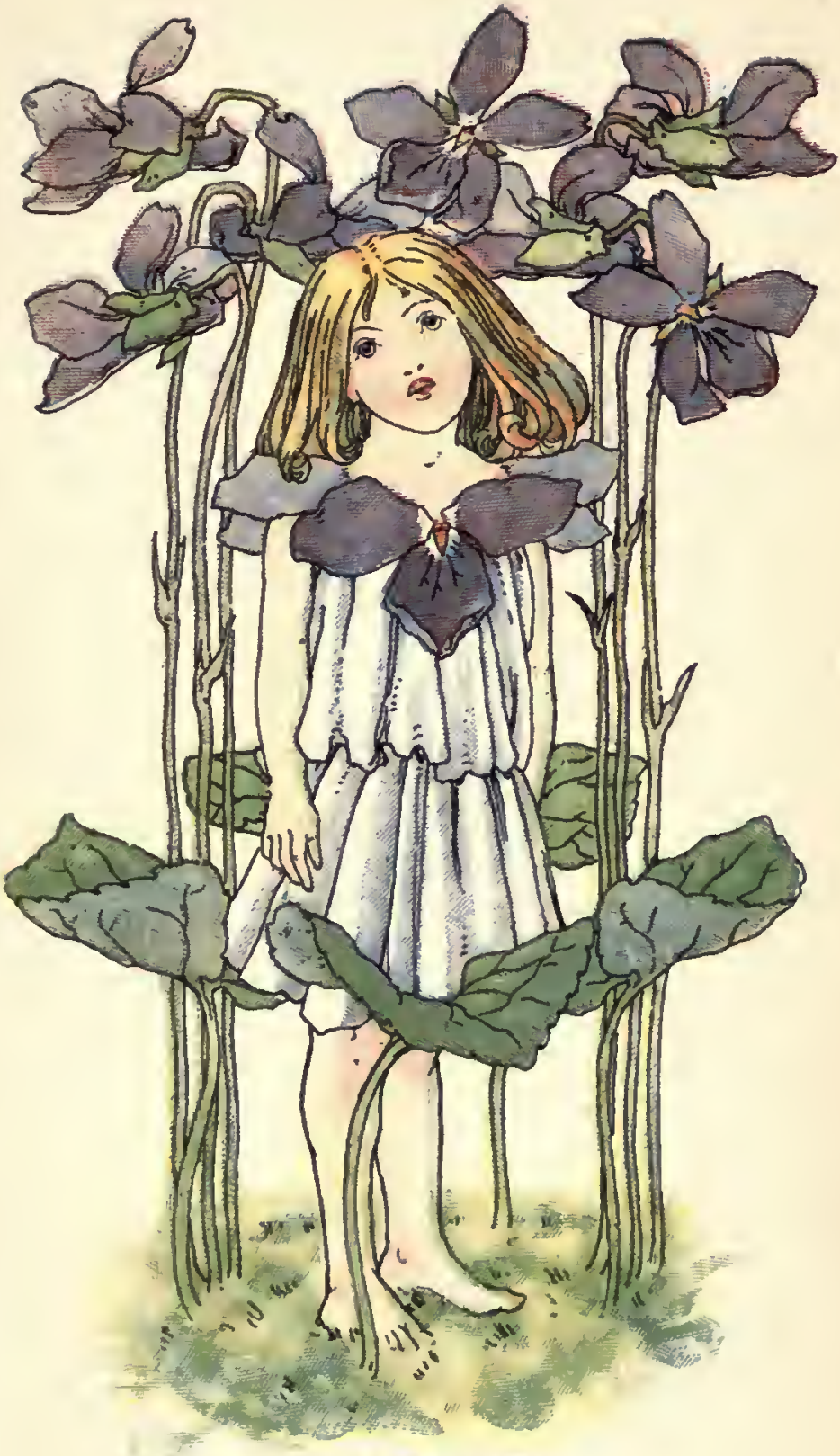
"The New Year is come, Lady Elder; and we want you to grant us leave to wake the little flowers that sleep under the snow!"

"The World is yet cold for the flowers, my children," an-

swers the Lady Elder. "They are all asleep, each to be awakened in her time. But this you may do. You may call them up for to-night, and when you leave this wood in the morning, they will all go back to their beds again."

"Our glad thanks to you, Ma'am," the fairies sing back joyfully.

Then they all join hands and frolic away, singing as they go:



VIOLET

DOG ROSE

"Little flowerets gay and sweet
Hear the patter of our feet;
Little flowerets sweet and gay
Come and dance a roundelay!"

Then slower and slower fades the dance.

* * * *

"O Christmas Rose! O Christmas Rose!" called Rusialka, on the particular night I am telling you of.

A little voice answered under the snow:

"I am here, good ladies!"

And the Christmas Rose, holding her blossom-standard in one hand, peeped out.

"Will you join our dance?" asked Rusialka.

The Christmas Rose held out her hands, and the merry party danced on singing a song the fairies love, till they came to a spot where the Ivy slept on a little brown bed of earth under a bright white coverlet of snow—with all her clusters of berries resting on her leaves.

HAWTHORN

HONEYSUCKLE

"Wake up! Wake up! little Ivy!" cried Rusialka.

"O, is it spring come again?" called out Ivy in a sleepy voice. "Or are you two sad friends who at parting want to give each other a token of true friendship?"

"We are not sad friends at all," answered Rusialka. "We are the Little Ladies come to frolic on earth, and we want you, Ivy, to join in our frolic."

"Isn't it cold out in the

world now?" asked the little voice again.

"The dance will warm you," answered the fairy. "And in the morning before we go, we will lay you back in your warm bed."

So Ivy joined the dance, and right merrily they went round and round, till they all had to sit down to take breath.

Highest of all, on a tuft of soft earth, sat Rusialka. All the little white fairies sat in a

POPPY

WILLOW

circle round her. And Ivy and Christmas Rose took one another by the hand and curtsied to Rusialka.

"White Lady," said the Ivy, "if you like we will go and wake up our little sisters, and when we are all here we will dance to your company a dance that the breezes taught us last spring."

"Go then," said Rusialka, "and bring your sisters to me."

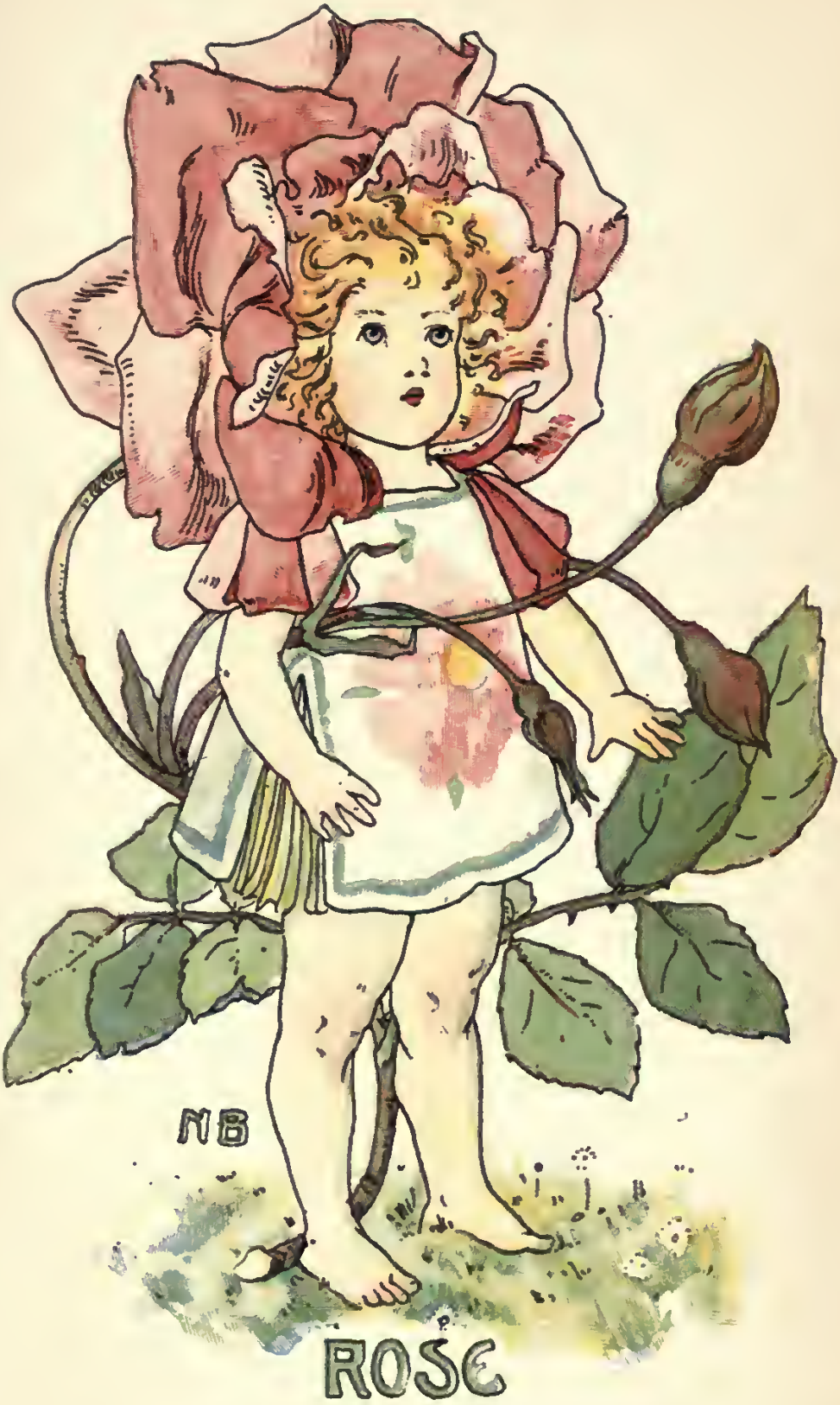
So Christmas Rose and Ivy went away, and returned

presently with another little sister-flower, the Yellow Jasmine.

"Jasmine," said Rusialka, "you are slight and slender, and winsome! I can see that your blossoms will bring a pang to tender hearts, for you mean 'separation,' but of all the messengers of woe you are the gentlest, sweet Jasmine."

Then the Michaelmas Daisy came forward too.

"And you, Daisy," added


NB
ROSE

CHRYSANTHEMUM

Rusialka, "you soften the bitter parting with a fond farewell."

The Jasmine gave a sigh and curtsied.

"If I bring a sad message," she said, "my sister the Snowdrop is ever close at hand—and her meaning is 'hope.'"

The Snowdrop came forward and curtsied to the fairy.

"I am the herald in all our flower pageants," she said. "And some call me the 'Fair Maid of February.'"

Rusialka waved her crystal wand three times and said: "I can see a walled-in garden in a distant land. A bell is ringing for vespers, and all the nuns with downcast eyes hasten across a cloister to the chapel door. The youngest of them all sees a bed of snowdrops lift their white heads and she smiles, because they are an emblem of hope, and a symbol of her life."

The Snowdrop curtsied, and stepped aside to make room for the Violet.

PERIWINKLE

CARNATION

She peeped out shyly from under a bunch of leaves and a sweet perfume filled the air.

"Violets for faithfulness," she said, turning to the Yellow Jasmine, "I comfort friends who are parted. What pictures do you see for me, Lady Rusialka?"

Rusialka waved her crystal wand and said:

"Call up your bright sisters who bring both joy and hope, and stand before me."

The Snowdrop turned to obey the fairy's command, and presently returned holding the Hawthorn and the Poppy by the hands.

"I bring security and hope," the Hawthorn said, "and I protect the good country people from harm, if they do but hang a spray of my blossoms over their houses in May. For then the wicked fairies and elves who are your enemies, White Ladies, as well as the enemies of men, can do no harm."

WOOD ANEMONE

WIND FLOWER

"I, too," said Honeysuckle, "I, too, fight the wicked little sprites and keep from harm the good milch cows and the beasts that feed and clothe poor children in cold northern lands."

Then the Poppy spoke out. She did not appear to be in the least bit shy, and waved the scarlet folds of her mantle about her head, and all the black fringe of seed trembled and stood out like a halo.

"And I am consolation,"

she said. "The hope that springs up again after doubt."

"If all were faithful and true," whispered the Violet, "there would be less need of you, proud Poppy."

"Or," suggested the Willow, "if people would but listen to my warning and not bind their hearts with chains. I am the emblem of freedom."

But the Rose and the Chrysanthemum came forward at these words and curtsied to Rusialka.

CORNFLOWER

COWSLIP

"They do not speak wisely and truly, O dear White Ladies," they said. "We both mean 'love,' and we know that smiles and joy attend us. Ask our sisters who best know."

"I am early friendship," said the Periwinkle, pensively, as she came and stood before Rusialka. "Even the very old on earth find comfort in me."

Then Clematis appeared. She lifted her banner like a wreath round her head. "I mean poverty," she said: "but

even poverty is sweet with love, for love can make all things beautiful."

But two flowers came forward sadly, and sighed as they curtsied to Rusialka. They were Carnation and Anemone.

"Alas! for my poor heart," said the first. "To me love brings but sadness."

"And when the dewdrops fall," said the second, "I think they are the tears of all who are like me, forsaken."

BLACKBERRY

SPINDLE BERRY

The Windflower stepped forward boldly, and a breath of breeze ran through her hair and raised her banner.

"I know that tears dry and give place to smiles," she said.

"Oh, do not weep then, sweet little sisters," said the Cornflower, gently. "See, Cowslip and I will take you by the hand and lead you to a bright, clear patch by the tree of the Lady Elder, where we will play together till morning."

As they disappeared they heard the voice of Rusialka:

"O, hasten, Blackberry," she said. "Hasten, Spindle, and Holly and Misletoe, for before the coldest hour that precedes the dawn has passed over the earth your little sisters must all be back in their little warm beds."

Then forward came the four linked hand in hand and curtsied. Then the Holly kissed the Mistletoe, and the Blackberry and the Spindleberry

HOLLY

KB
MISTLETOE

raised their banners on high, while all the flowers marched through hand in hand.

They marched up to the tree of the Lady Elder, and Rusialka knocked once, twice, thrice, with her crystal wand.

The Lady Elder came out of her tree and smiled upon the flowers.

"Good night, my children," she said. "Good night, and farewell until the Spring."

And then the flowers frolicked and danced merrily;

and at the dawn of day they drooped their heads and fell asleep, and the fairies brought them back to their little warm beds and covered them up with their sparkling white coverlets.

And then all the White Ladies climbed on their moonbeam and glided softly up, up, up, into Fairyland.

CLEMATIS

DOLLS
TOYS GAMES
HAMLEY'S
REGENT ST
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